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The situation in the Middle East

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Letter dated 11 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Since the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and the Oslo agreements, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have reached a series of agreements in an effort to bring to a conclusion decades of enmity and conflict. A key aspect of the agreements was the concept of peaceful, non-violent negotiations as the only acceptable method of resolving the conflict. To this end, the agreements included efforts to build trust, reduce tension and develop a relationship of cooperation and coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

In an exchange of letters to the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, dated 9 September 1993, Chairman Yasser Arafat wrote: "the PLO commits itself to the Middle East Peace Process and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations ... the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and we assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations, and discipline violators."

During the course of the violence, incitement and rioting in the West Bank and Gaza over the past days, the Palestinian leadership has continually violated this central concept of peaceful resolution of disputes and has breached explicit agreement between the two sides in an egregious and aggressive effort to bring the peace process to a close. These violations constitute a grave and serious threat to international peace and security. The Palestinians have openly rejected vital terms of agreements reached between the sides and have directly encouraged violent action as a method of achieving political goals.

The following are a number of central violations of these agreements which have served to exacerbate tensions and violence in the region.

Incitement: Speeches of Palestinian leadership, broadcasts on Palestinian television and radio and sermons by religious leaders have consistently called for an abandonment of the peace process with Israel and constitute a direct and gross incitement to individual and mob violence.

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Actions of mob violence: Mobs and armed militia together with Palestinian police forces have been attacking Israeli soldiers and individual civilians, including women and children, by throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails, and firing automatic rifles and other weapons. The violence has continued in a variety of locations and included the use of weapons supplied as part of the Oslo Peace Process for the express purpose of maintaining public order and internal security.

Hamas terrorists: In recent days, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has released convicted terrorists from its prisons. Many of these terrorists were convicted by Palestinian courts of the murdering and maiming of innocent Israeli civilians. All were sentenced to extended prison sentences. In the most recent PA Cabinet meeting, the Hamas and Jihad Islami terrorist organizations were invited to participate — an action which sends an additional signal to the peoples of the region of the Palestinian rejection of the peace process.

Desecration of religious sites: As detailed in my letter of 8 October 2000, the attacks upon the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus on 7 October 2000 were a blatant violation of an agreement reached only one day earlier and a gross sacrilege of an ancient site, holy to the people of Israel and Jews throughout the world.

Israel appeals to the international community to call upon the Palestinian leadership to comply with agreements it has signed, to immediately cease the incitement and mob violence against Israel and to return to the negotiating process.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations